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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, thank You for sustaining us with Your steadfast love and unchanging mercy. Without Your compassion, all of our efforts would be in vain. Your wondrous deeds keep us secure.

May our lawmakers remember that true greatness comes through service. May they embrace their accountability to You to be responsible stewards of the opportunities You provide them each day. Lord, strengthen them in their challenging work, reminding them often of the fragility of life. Empower them to trust You without wavering.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week looks to be a busy one in the Senate. We have a lot of important legislation to consider. We are hoping our friends across the aisle will work with us to do so in an expeditious manner. For instance, we will begin the process

of finishing our work on the balanced budget before the Senate, which the Senate passed just before Easter. Passing that balanced budget was a big moment for the new Senate. For years, the budget process was ignored almost entirely in this Chamber, and the idea of a balanced budget passing was basically unthinkable. But now the Senate is under new management. Things are changing. Soon we will conference with the House to work out a final budget that will be passed by the full Congress. That is just the latest example of Congress getting back to work. I know a lot of Americans are happy to see that.

But the budget is far from the only item on the Senate's near-term agenda. The Senate will soon consider bipartisan legislation that is designed to ensure that seniors on Medicare don't lose access to their doctors. It is a solution to a broken Medicare payment system that has vexed congressional leaders of both parties for years. It would mean an end to the annual exercise of Congress passing a temporary fix to the problem one year and then coming right back to the very same cliff the next year without actually solving the underlying problem.

So the fact that we have a bipartisan reform bill here is significant in itself. The fact that it passed the House overwhelmingly is even more significant. It doesn't mean the legislation is perfect. It doesn't mean we won't have some disagreements about it. But I do think the bill deserves a vote, and it is my hope that the Senate will soon take one.

We will also continue to work to pass the bipartisan Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. It is legislation designed to prevent women and children from being sold into modern-day slavery. It was reported out of the Judiciary Committee with the support of every single Democrat, and the Senate took up this bill with the consent of every single Democrat. There is no rea-

son they should now turn around and filibuster this antislavery bill at this point. As a victims advocate put it, Senate Democrats should stop choosing a phantom problem over real victims.

A large, bipartisan majority of the Senate has voted repeatedly to end a very regrettable Democratic filibuster of this antislavery bill. It will only take a few more votes from our friends across the aisle to bring hope to children in chains and women suffering in the shadows. So we have been reaching out to our friends to work with them to end this Democratic filibuster of human rights legislation. The Senate should pass this bipartisan bill right away, and as soon as that happens, we will turn to the Loretta Lynch nomination.

Committees in the new Senate are also working hard to advance more bipartisan legislation. We already saw the Intelligence Committee vote 14 to 1 to approve bipartisan legislation aimed at protecting the personal and financial information of middle-class Americans from cyber criminals. Over in the Finance Committee, we see the top Republican and the top Democrat continue to discuss the best way forward to increase American exports with new trade legislation. Today, we will see another product of negotiations between a top committee Republican and a top committee Democrat—legislation aimed at reforming our education system—considered in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. We hope to bring all of these issues to the Senate floor for debate in the very near future.

Another important bipartisan bill that will be considered by committee today is the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. The Foreign Relations Committee is set to mark that up today. The legislation is supported by a large number of Democrats, and it is no wonder why. The bill is aimed at giving Congress and the American people a say—a say—in reviewing and approving an international agreement

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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